11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tical character of Gondar has been implanted deeply enough so that one young Gondarē, commenting on the absence of dance halls such as are found in other Ethiopian cities, remarked: "This place is one big monastery."

In accord with Haile Selassie's program of centralization, the chief provincial administrators in Gondar are not local men. This has created a subtle problem for the national government. The Gondarēs cannot forget that their city was the capital of Ethiopia for more than two hundred years. They view the Shoans as political upstarts and love to refer to the Shoan Amhara as "Galla." As a result, Shoans in high offices at Gondar have found themselves boycotted by the natives. Their wishes have frequently been ignored by local subordinates or the local populace. They have not been invited to take part in the social life of the Gondarēs. All this has made the lot of Shoan emissaries in Gondar frustrating and lonely.

In order to increase the Gondarē's identification with the national government, its representatives in Gondar have tried in various ways to assert the symbolic supremacy of Addis Ababa. The traditional site for celebrating the festival of Masqal—the great sycamore near Fāsil's castle—has been shifted to the modern Haile Selassie I Square. An imposing sculpture is to be placed over the tomb of Nagāssi, and a principal street in Gondar has been named after him. Plans are afoot to outshine the traditional marketplace with one enhanced by modern facilities, to be named Haile Selassie I Market.

Despite the evident satisfaction with which one Shoan administrator noted that "the Gondarēs are not so proud any more," even for Shoa's purposes the traditional prestige of Gondar cannot be completely eradicated. The government gains much profit by extolling Ethiopia's long history. The flight to Gondar has become a standard part of the itinerary for foreign dignitaries. Gondar remains, after the stelae of Aksum and the monoliths of Lalibela, the most impressive visible reminder of the Ethiopian past.

Manz Today

The accession of the House of Manz to the throne of Ethiopia has given Manz much prestige in the national capital. Because Menelik and his successors filled the government with people from their home area, numerous higher officials of the imperial Ethiopian government are also of Manzē origin. Partly for these reasons, partly because of their scanty knowledge of Ethiopian geography, many Ethiopians born and raised in Addis Ababa claim to be of Manzē ancestry, even though their families may in fact have come from Merhābētē or Bulgā or other parts of Shoa.

Due to the close tie between the present imperial family and the homeland of Manz, a special affection persists between Haile Selassie and the Manzēs. The latter are said to have a standing invitation at the palace, including the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

referents are relative: a man living at 7,500 feet may be considered *qolaññā* by one living at 10,000 and *dēgaññā* by one living at 6,000 feet.

The broadest membership circle that the Amhara peasant normally thinks in terms of is that of the ethnic group consisting of all Amhara.[10] The ethnic self-conception of the Amhara is one which stresses certain physical and cultural characteristics, thanks to which he regards himself as superior to all non-Abyssinian groups in Ethiopia as well as to all non-Ethiopian nationals. With regard to race, the Amhara consider themselves distinctly more handsome than both the white man and the Negro man, to both of whom they apply derisive epithets. Their cultural identity is defined chiefly with respect to religion and language.

To all Amhara except a small minority who are Muslim, the name of their ethnic group is synonymous with "Christian." The term signifies Ethiopian Orthodox Christian; for the Amhara peasant, "Catholic" and "Protestant" are equivalent to "Muslim" and "pagan" as terms designating so many kinds of heathens. And being an Ethiopian Christian is to the Amhara a mark of superiority in at least two respects: it means belonging to a chosen people, heirs to the Jews and sole bearers of authentic Christianity; and it means being an adept in praying and fasting, which to the Amhara are peculiarly Abyssinian arts. This orientation has motivated a certain amount of exclusionism vis-à-vis non-Christian Ethiopians. The latter are disdained because they are not Christian, while at the same time the particularistic cast of Abyssinian Christianity has made the Amhara somewhat reluctant to proselytize and admit non-Abyssinians to the fold. A similar exclusiveness colors the Amhara's sentiments about his language. Knowledge of Amharic is considered another index of superiority, and the Amhara look down on Ethiopians who do not speak Amharic or who speak it with an accent.

The Amhara claim superiority over other Ethiopian peoples in connection with certain other aspects of culture besides religion and language, although most Amhara peasants have very little knowledge about the other ethnic groups in the country.[11] Occupational hunters and pastoral nomads are ridiculed, for example, because of their ignorance of the arts of farming and of eating *ǐnjarā*. Vis-à-vis Europeans, on the other hand, the Amhara's self-image tends to stress qualities of bravery and toughness. Insofar as he has had contact with foreigners, the Amhara has become self-conscious about his rugged way of life—his hot foods, endurance on trips, courage in revenge, and virile longevity—and looks down on the softness of the European.

Being an Amhara is thus belonging to a superior category of human beings. This is not simple ethnocentrism; it reflects rather a basically aristocratic orientation that is repeated within the Amhara fold. It is not only members of other ethnic and religious groups who are considered inferior,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

instance, as contrasted with sentiments of mutuality and solidarity; in the second, as contrasted with a condition of numerous social obligations and constraints; in the third, as contrasted with anonymity and conformity. In so doing our attention will necessarily be directed to disparate orders of phenomena. The empirical referent of these three concepts of individualism will be studied as follows:

(1) *Egoism.*—The degree of individualistic disposition among the Amhara will be examined in terms of two measures: the extent to which individuals are attached to collective symbols and interests, and the extent to which interpersonal relations take non-solidaristic forms.

(2) *Independence.*—The degree of individualistic social organization will be examined with reference to the different institutional foci of Amhara life, and measured by the extent to which role definitions are permissive rather than prescriptive; the possibility of voluntary as opposed to compulsory associations; and the possibilities for the protection of individual rights.

(3) *Individuality.*—The degree of individuality will be measured by the extent to which originality and heroic excellence are valued in the media of self-development and self-expression customary in Amhara culture.

EGOISM VERSUS SOLIDARISM

Self and Community

To what extent are the Amhara bound to one another by a sense of community, and to what extent are their actions guided by a sense of identification with collective symbols and needs? One conspicuous area of such commitment lies in the realm of religious affiliation. The Amhara manifest a strong sense of solidarity with their coreligionists over against all those who do not wear a *mätab* and who have not been baptized. They are deeply attached to the several symbols of the church—the church building itself, the compound in which it is enclosed, the holy ark, and all representatives of ecclesiastical authority—and react to violations of the dignity and purity of their religious symbols as to a personal affront. On certain ceremonial occasions they march in procession around the church shouldering rifles and spears, indicating their determination to defend by force the integrity of their religious objects. In cases where church membership has been channeled along the lines of schismatic orders, the Amhara—particularly the monks—have defended their doctrines faithfully and have at times suffered martyrdom.

With respect to their territorial and linguistic groups, the Amhara seem similarly attached to their collective symbols, if with somewhat less passion than in the religious case. As we have seen, the Amhara has a keen sense of identification with his native locale, or *ägär*, and is readily disposed to defend it against all comers. The expression *yägurē lijj* ("child of my country" or

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 181 186 619 *Landsmann*) regularly evokes considerable sentiment. There is also a strong sense of solidarity based on the use of Amharic—both among the Amhara as a whole vis-à-vis other Ethiopians who either do not know Amharic or speak it imperfectly, and among regional dialect groups. The people of Gojjam and of the Gondar area are particularly chauvinistic with regard to the quality of their Amharic.

*121 181 621 This attachment to symbols of religion, territory, and language is important in providing a basis for identity and morale. Yet these attachments are of relatively little import in shaping a self-transcending orientation in the day-to-day activities of the Amhara; for the crucial context of these activities is the local community, and in the civic sphere the Amhara manifest very little solidarity. Indeed, it may be said that the Amhara have virtually no sense of "community" at all, for the concept can scarcely be rendered in idiomatic Amharic.

*121 181 361 621 The absence of community sentiment among the Amhara is implied by their ecology. Not only did the Amhara fail to produce extensive and durable urban centers (with the limited exception of Gondar) but their country is even barren of that frequent cornerstone of peasant life, the village. The Amhara have distributed themselves thinly, scattering in groups of fours and fives up and down their mountains and plateaus. Larger aggregations are found on the estates of noblemen, but these constitute expanded private households rather than civic communities. The Amhara justify this dispersion of their population on the grounds that wide spaces are needed for the grazing of livestock and that a man needs to live on the land he farms. But herding and farming have been carried out well enough elsewhere by people living together in villages, and it is quite probable that this ecological pattern is due as much as anything else to the Amhara's preference for not having too much association with those outside his immediate kin group. In his own words, the Amhara prefers the kind of neighbor who "does not push the boundaries" (*wassan aynakām*), and believes, as noted earlier, that *bēt-ennā māqbar labetchāw naw* ("home and the grave are by oneself"). It is a preference manifest in such solitary living arrangements as that of divorced women who sometimes live by themselves in the country, eking out a living by spinning cotton or brewing spirits, and in the age-old predilection of Abyssinian monks for anchoritism.

*121 181 156 157 The moral counterpart of this ecological pattern is a preoccupation with private interests that leaves little room for the consideration of communal needs. According to the Amhara vocabulary of motives, social action is motivated first and foremost by the pursuit of *ṭiqem*, or narrowly conceived self-interest.[9] This matter-of-fact acceptance of egoistic motivation among the Amhara appears during what is a common occurrence: the shameless subversion of occasions which are set up to consider communal problems and to

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

any case the *shïftä* is a man apart, who makes his home in uninhabited mountainous country or lowlands and lives by stealing cattle and robbing travelers. Some Amhara become *shïftä* because of a passion for this way of life; this is particularly true of soldiers who, after a long campaign, prefer the continuation of a predatory and free existence to a return to the hard work of the fields. Others do so involuntarily, in order to escape punishment after committing some violence in the course of a personal dispute.

The attitudes of civilian Amhara toward the *shïftä* combine fear and dislike with a strong tendency toward idealization. The *shïftä* is feared because he is a killer; if a person happens to witness him performing some act of theft or murder, he will usually keep quiet about it for fear of reprisal. He is disliked because he lives parasitically off the productive activities of others. But the *shïftä* is widely admired, on the other hand, because he possesses a number of qualities that are dear to the Amhara. He is reputed to be an expert singer of *shïllalä*. He is credited with unusually handsome features because, living at the expense of others as he does, he has plenty to eat and no arduous work to wear him down. Above all he is *guabaz*, the great Amhara virtue that embodies bravery, fierceness, hardihood, and general male competence. This is symbolized by the *shïftä*'s letting his hair grow to the proportions of a *gofarë*, the wildly thick hair style of the warrior.

The Amhara's admiration for the *shïftä* is reminiscent of American attitudes toward the outlaw in "western" films. In the Amhara case, however, this is not balanced by a corresponding idealization of a sheriff-figure as the representative of civil order. Although a feudal lord or governor who captures some *shïftä* in his area may be admired, this admiration will be directed to his personal qualities of bravery or cunning far more than to his capacity as an agent of "law and order." There is no feeling among the Amhara that the *shïftä* must be captured simply because he is an outlaw. Instead, a more pragmatic approach is taken: the *shïftä* is acknowledged as a legitimate social type and is tolerated at a distance so long as his killing does not become wanton or excessive. This approach, and what, in the idealization of the *shïftä*, appears to be a tendency to identify with someone who openly flaunts the norms of civil society, bespeaks a relatively weak commitment to the value of civil order.

The weakness of the Amhara's attachment to symbols of local community is paralleled by his parochialism with respect to more inclusive levels of community. This parochialism is manifest in diverse ways in the different social strata. Among the peasantry it appears, for example, as an aversion to arranging marriages and permitting land to pass to an Amhara from a different province. Among the clergy it has been expressed in terms of those regionally based doctrinal differences which have disrupted the church for many centuries. Among the nobility it has taken the form of incessant politi-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

cal animosities which have weakened the nobility as a status group both in relation to the emperor and in relation to foreign countries. Another respect in which Amhara parochialism has been expressed is the addiction to regional stereotypes, according to which the Tigrean has been depicted as flighty, irresponsible, and "dry"; the Gondarē as intolerably proud; the Gojjami as sly and treacherous; and the Shoan as calculating and untrustworthy. Despite its long history as a nation, Ethiopia probably never experienced more than the dimmest stirrings of a truly national sentiment among its people; and more than once in the past century have regional lords strengthened the hand of European powers in Ethiopia by seeking their help in the combat against other local rulers.

Self and Others

In addition to considering the extent to which the members of a society identify with the needs and symbols of their more inclusive collectivities, one may also define the individualistic disposition on the dimension of personal interaction. Egoism contrasts, in other words, not only with the disposition to perceive collective purposes as one's own, but also with the disposition to seek solidarity and mutuality in face-to-face relations.

This aspect of egoism/solidarism is studied by surveying the more important forms of interaction that appear in a given society. In the survey of elementary social behavior among the Amhara now to be reported, two criteria were used to establish the importance of any given form: (1) the frequency with which it was observed, and (2) the extent to which it was stylized or "institutionalized." These criteria were not embodied in any systematic observational procedures; the only control over the observer's bias here is my own deliberate effort to present a balanced and accurate picture.

We may begin by considering the more solidaristic forms. Interaction among the Amhara is characterized, first of all, by a sort of *sensuous camaraderie*. The Amhara enjoy bodily contact. Members of the same sex customarily hold one another's hands for long periods while conversing, or embrace one another in casual fellowship. Crowds of commoners cheerfully huddle close to one another on the floor through the night when they have assembled for some social function and cannot return home the same day. Relatives and companions of the same sex incline to sleep in one another's arms, at least in the chillier altitudes.

Both their style of dress and their manner of eating give the Amhara a ready way to express this comradely feeling. Their untailored cotton or wool cloth easily adapts itself to being shared. Except perhaps for individuals of high social status, the typical Amhara is ready to use his toga as a blanket-wrap for both himself and another whom he may scarcely know.